Retro #6: MARDI GRAS

In the early 1900s, St. Stanislaus College was designated by *The Sea Coast Echo,* the local paper in Bay St. Louis as "the Carnival Palace." An article in the 1903 edition gave elaborate details of the grand Mardi Gras celebration on the campus where many of the townspeople gathered. Festivities began with the arrival of Rex and his court by royal yacht. Crowds waited and watched as "The Mizpah" sailed across the Bay and arrived at the school's wharf around 2:00 p.m. They applauded and waved flags as the King and his attendants, all elegantly dressed and masked, were led in procession by the SSC band from the pier to the Throne Room in the school auditorium for a pageant. After the ceremony during which the mayor presented the King and Queen with keys to the city, students put finishing touches on the 14 wagons they decorated to be used as floats in the parade. But first there was a splendid banquet in the dining hall. In the early evening spectators lined the streets as the band and the school cadets led the Mardi Gras parade of floats to town along Front Street (now Beach Blvd). From Main Street the parade passed along Second, Bookter, Front, Citizens, Second and Union streets back to the college for a dance that went late into the night.

Such celebrations continued for more than a decade. In some years, the arrival of Rex was accompanied by the booming of a cannon! Or, if the Bay was choppy on Mardi Gras Day, the king and his court would process in motor vehicles from Waveland. *The Sea Coast Echo* in 1909 and 1910 praised St. Stanislaus College for providing the city with Mardi Gras entertainment and urged local businesses to take initiative so that citizens would not have to go to New Orleans, Biloxi, or Mobile for parades. In 1920 the Zu Zu Carnival Club organized the first public parades for Mardi Gras in Bay St. Louis. And, of course, the St. Stanislaus band marched in the city's parade as they have ever since.

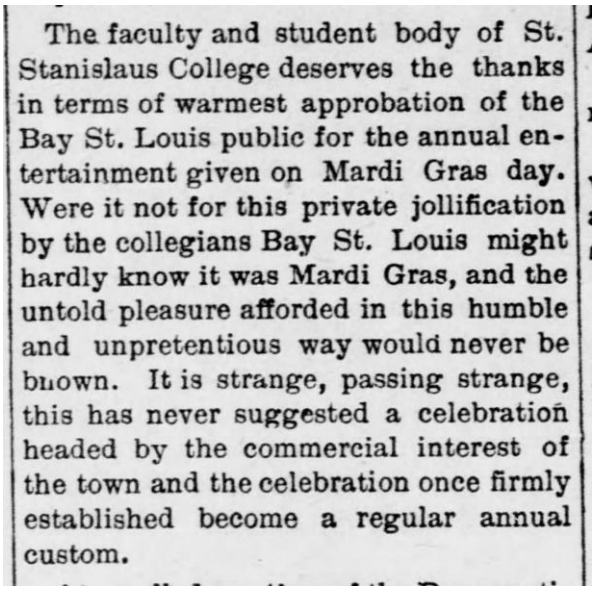
Headlines/excerpts from *The Sea Coast Echo* from

1909, Feb. 27 and 1910, February 12

CARNIVAL CELEBRATION.

St. Stanislaus Collegians Give Bay St. Louis Regular Annual Celebration —Hon. W. T. McDonald's Address of Welcome to the Royal Visitors.

Mardi Gras in Bay St. Louis would be pretty much insipid without the annual celebration we Bay St. Louisians and others are favored with annually by the student body of St. Stanislaus College under the auspices of the faculty and the further co-operation of the business people and other friends of the collegians and the college.



The faculty and student body of St. Stanislaus College deserves the thanks in terms of warmest approbation of the Bay St. Louis public for the annual entertainment given on Mardi Gras day. Were it not for this private jollification by the collegians Bay St. Louis might hardly know it was Mardi Gras, and the untold pleasure afforded in this humble and unpretentious way would never be known. It is strange, passing strange, this has never suggested a celebration headed by the commercial interest of the town and the celebration once firmly established become a regular annual custom.

1908, Feb. 29

Under the auspices of the collegians of St. Stanislaus, there will be a Mardi Gras celebration Tuesday afternoon, upon the arrival of the royal vessel, "Mizpah," between 2 and 3 o'clock at the college pier. The parade will form in front of the college and the line of march will be as follows: Up Front street to Carrol avenue, to Second street, to Main street out to Nicaise avenue; up Bookter to Hancock, to Citizen and Front thence to college. There will be no night parade.

1904, Feb. 20

Bay St. Louis Mardi-Gras.

Tuesday, 17th. inst., was a real gala day for the students of old St. Stanislaus and the people of the Bay. Everything came off smoothly; there was no friction of any kind whatever. The morning was spent in individual masking. At 2:30 p. m., the royal yacht "Mizpah" was sighted near Pass Marianna, and shortly afterwards, amid the booming of cannon and the strains of martial music, their gracious majesties landed at pier 990.